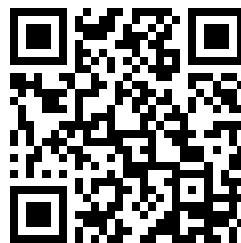


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SZERELMEY.  
THE PORTRAIT  
OF  
JESUS MARIA HODEGEDRIA.  
LONDON. 1856.







4406937.

THE  
P O R T R A I T  
OF  
JESUS MARIA HODEGEDRIA,

ישו מריה חודגדריא

PAINTED BY  
ST. LUKE, THE EVANGELIST.

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AN HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

BY  
N. C. SZERELMEY,  
THE OWNER OF THE PICTURE.

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LONDON:  
PUBLISHED BY CHARLES DOLMAN,  
61, NEW BOND STREET, AND 22, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1856.



## P R E F A C E .

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THE East is the land of wonders: it is the witness of the mysterious creation of the human pair to whom youthful nature sang her first lullaby in Paradise. It is the scene of those earliest incidents of our race of which we derive no knowledge, either from history or tradition. Whatever lulls our infancy into sweet dreams, animates our youth, awakens reflexion in manhood, or prompts it to great deeds, has come to us from the East. There was first heard the sound of language, that precious gift of Heaven, to which we are indebted for every social pleasure, for all the advantages of moral and intellectual cultivation: there, too, was first originated the art of writing, by which language, thoughts, and ideas are preserved and propagated: there was made manifest that priceless jewel,—a pure worship of the Deity,—the religion of humanity, peace, and love. The East is the classical soil of civilization and art, where the ideal creations of genius celebrated their loftiest triumphs; where poetry—that inspired parent of the beautiful—was matured to its most perfect blossom; where liberty, the enchantress of life, passed her golden age.

As far as the memory of the earliest generation extends, we have heard the East extolled with enthusiastic love and affection, as a delightful home—a land of promise. Always has it been the object of the liveliest wishes, hopes, and dreams; the goal sighed after by millions, who—all inspired by the same lofty idea—have flowed thither from the remotest West, or North, as pilgrims or as warriors, with cross or with sword, in an uninterrupted



stream, to tread those places that have become to us sacred and reverend beyond all others, through the holy deeds and passion of our Redeemer.

Hence it is no wonder that all desire to possess some remembrance of the East; that every memorial, from the most precious relic to a mere handful of earth, becomes an object of adoration.

By a remarkable chance, or rather through the dispensation of a Divine Providence, I myself, in the course of my pilgrimage to the Land of Promise, have come into possession of a treasure of rare antiquity, and priceless value. This is nothing less than the faithful portrait of the Virgin Mary, with the Child Jesus. The preservation of such a jewel, amid the destructive storms of eighteen centuries; may be ranked among the miracles in which the East so much abounds, and which chiefly owe their miraculous character to the circumstance that we cannot pursue the connecting thread of their history through all the vicissitudes of time—all the periods of transition.

The manner in which I obtained this picture, and the proof that it is genuine, may be learned from the following pages.

## THE PORTRAIT OF JESUS MARIA HODEGEDRIA, &c., &c., &c.

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THE same inexplicable desire, which long before my time took so many to that Holy Land, that was once the abiding-place of our forefathers, induced me also to undertake a pilgrimage from Rome.

Having acquired in Italy a sufficient experience in art, and the knowledge required for the proposed journey, I embarked on the 12th January, 1829, in company with several friends, at Ancona, on my route for Palestine.

As the object of these pages is a description not of all the incidents of my voyage, but merely of a single episode, I will at once, without circumlocution, pass on to that portion of my adventures which brings us directly to the matter in hand.

After landing at Beyruth, crossing Mount Lebanon, performing our pilgrimage to the holy places in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other spots of historical or religious celebrity, and traversing the desert, under the convoy of a great caravan, in one continuous march of twenty-five days, we arrived, on the 20th of June, at the beautiful Valley of Hebron, and on the 24th trod the coast of Seder. While we pursued our weary way we met another caravan, proceeding towards the spot from which we had come. One of the travellers rode up to us, and entreated us, in the name of Christian charity, to take charge of a poor man, who, attacked by a severe illness, had been left behind, and now lay in a Bedouin village. When we had reached the village which had been pointed out, and which consisted of a few mud-cabins, we soon found the invalid, stretched upon the bare ground, in a miserable hut. His garment—a gown of coarse blue cloth, gathered round his body with a black thong—indicated a Greek monk, to all appearance, in the prime of life. When on nearer inspection we perceived spots of blood on his pale face and black beard, we at first thought he had been attacked and wounded by the Bedouins. Soon, however, he himself informed us, as well as his feeble voice would allow, that the blood came from a violent cough, the consequence of

a severe cold. Using the Italian language, which he spoke pretty fluently, he described to us, in faltering accents, the helpless condition into which he had been brought by the cough, and expectoration of blood, which had come on a few days before, and utterly prevented his further progress. He now implored us, for pity's sake, not to leave him any longer in his present miserable lodging, where, deprived as he was of all human aid, he would inevitably fall a prey to hunger or wild beasts, but to take him to Alexandria, where he would find assistance. Tearful eyes and clasped hands accompanied his entreaties.

A general consultation arose as to what was to be done with the sick man, our fellow-travellers, who were for the most part Armenian merchants, objecting to a compliance with his request, on the ground that he might be infected with some contagious disease, that would bring us all into peril of our lives. They proposed, therefore, to give him from our store sufficient food and drink for a few days, and then to leave him to his fate. This proceeding would have been so directly contrary to the doctrine of Christian charity, bequeathed to us by Him whose memory we had come to celebrate, that we resolved not to leave the monk in his forlorn condition. Fortunately the evening had set in, and we took up our night-quarters near the spot, so that while the caravan was occupied with the preparation of supper, I could consult with my friends, and more particularly with one of our fellow-travellers, an Armenian of better disposition than the rest, who had evinced great sympathy for the invalid. The result of our deliberation was, that all at last assented to my proposal that we should take the sick man with us. With the assistance of the Armenian, who could talk Arabic, I succeeded in hiring a camel, at my own expense, as far as Suez, from the Bedouins encamped in the neighbourhood, and upon this animal, on the following day, we placed the sick man, in a half-recumbent position. Our other fellow-travellers were so completely overawed by the resolution that we displayed, that they tacitly agreed to an arrangement they could no longer prevent.

Through the jolting of the camel, the fine dust that filled the air, and the painful position in which he was placed, the condition of the invalid in the course of our journey became extremely precarious; he was often so severely attacked with fits of coughing, that we feared he would be suffocated. At last, on the evening of the 26th of June, we reached the Gulf of Suez; on the 27th we were conveyed from the Asiatic borders to Africa, crossing the gulf by means of boats, which is about half-an-hour's journey broad, and landing at Suez. We pitched our camp on the coast, in the vicinity of the town, and took two days rest. This repose was necessary for the refreshment of the invalid, and enabled us to provide him with more careful attendance.

On the 29th of June we were again in motion, and after a wearisome journey of

three days, reached Cairo on the 1st of July, when we took a lodging in the Copt-quarter, at the house of an hospitable Armenian, to whom we had been introduced by his countryman, our fellow-traveller.

The effect of such a journey on the invalid may easily be imagined. My first care, as soon as we had got him into the house, was to send for a physician, who arrived in about half-an-hour. When he had closely examined the patient, he candidly stated that his situation was very critical, and therefore, above all things, recommended quiet. After nine days' attendance the invalid seemed to grow better, and was enabled, in accordance with his wish, to proceed farther. We had him laid in a boat, which we had hired at Boulak, on the Nile, and on the 10th of July began to descend the stream. Having, on the 14th, changed our boat for a smaller one at Adfee, we passed through the marshy districts of the Mahmud-Canal to Alexandria, where I deposited the invalid at the house of an honest Greek.

I imagined that I had thus sufficiently complied with the wish of the invalid, and the precepts of Christian charity, and after a sojourn of five days at Alexandria, in the company of my fellow-travellers, made preparations to embark in a brig that was bound for Ancona.

On the evening before my departure I went once more to the monk, to commend him to the care of his host, and also to learn his name, which I had hitherto omitted to inscribe in my diary. I found him considerably better, and although in an exhausted condition, perfectly free from any dangerous malady.

In answer to my inquiry respecting his name, he told me that it was Isaac, adding that he was a Greek priest, who had been at Jerusalem about thirty-four years before, and had there learned the Italian language from one of his brethren. He had set out for Europe on very important business, but in the course of his journey had been attacked with an inflammation of the lungs, which had been unskilfully treated at the Convent of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai. Afterwards, when he had desired to proceed farther with a party of merchants, his disease had taken the form of a cough, with expectoration of blood: he was therefore compelled to abandon all thoughts of travelling, and to stop in the hut where we had found him, and where he had lain for six days, exposed to want and sickness. When he heard of my approaching departure, he seized my hand with warmth, and burst into tears. After I had explained to him the necessity for our separation, he became greatly excited, and implored me in the most urgent manner not to abandon him, but to crown the benevolence I had hitherto displayed, by taking him with me to Europe. "Save my life," he exclaimed with emotion, "I will ever be grateful to you, and if God allows us to reach Italy, you shall be richly rewarded."

I must confess that I felt deeply moved by the condition of the invalid, and the

touching manner in which he urged his request. Indeed, at that moment I only thought how I should fulfil it, and procure for him a berth in the ship. This was more easily said than done, for when I made my fellow-travellers acquainted with my plan, the difficulty of carrying it into execution was soon made manifest, inasmuch as the captains of ships had been strictly forbidden to take any sick persons on board. However, as we knew that the monk's malady had nothing in common with the plague, and that therefore his presence in the ship could not be in any way dangerous to the passengers or the crew, we fully set before the captain the exact condition of Father Isaac, accompanying with a few ducats our request that he might be taken with us, and, after some deliberation, received permission to bring him on board the ship, provided we would defray his travelling expenses.

On the third day after our departure a violent storm arose, and as the motion of the vessel made the invalid very ill, his condition became hourly worse. We young people, who waited at his couch by turns, did all we could to alleviate his sufferings, but the violence of the cough and expectoration, which was now redoubled, seemed to indicate an approaching dissolution. Our surmise now proved correct. On the evening of the 21st of July he called the captain and all the rest of us around him. Signs of approaching death were clearly discernible in his face; he breathed with the greatest difficulty, and upon the captain asking him what he desired, he said in broken words, that if God should be pleased to call him from the world before the ship touched land, he wished to thank him for the kindness with which he had been treated; while to me, as his best friend and benefactor, he bequeathed a leathern pouch, which he always kept under his head as a pillow, and which was, indeed, his only property, together with the whole of its contents. He then took hold of my hand, and looked at me for the last time, with a glance like that of a transfigured saint. After a while we left the sick man to his repose, and went upon deck, where the captain, laughingly, congratulated me on my legacy, and declared to all present, in a jesting tone, that far from harboring any feeling of envy against me on account of the good fortune from which the monk had excluded him, he begged me, on the contrary, to take possession of my prize immediately after the testator's death, that he might not be tempted to throw the suspicious pouch overboard, with the whole of its contents.

The hours of the poor monk were numbered. After severe sufferings he died in the course of the night, and this sudden death had a greater effect upon us all than might, under the circumstances, have been imagined. When, on the following morning, the captain and the crew had convinced themselves of the fact, the corpse was brought upon the deck, sewn up in a sail-cloth, and after the surrounding persons had uttered a *pater noster* for the soul of the deceased, lowered into the watery grave. This scene,

simple as it was, made upon us a deep and painful impression. Scarcely had the corpse sunk below the billows than the sun appearing on the horizon, intimated to us that all was a mere transition, and that whether our dark journey lay through the earth or the waves, it led us to the light of eternal truth—of everlasting life.

The solemn stillness which prevailed in the vessel after the brief ceremony was over, was interrupted by the loud voice of the captain, who warned me to take possession of my legacy, as he intended to throw the bedding used by the deceased into the sea. Indignant at this discourteous interruption to my meditations, more particularly in the presence of my friends, I ordered my servant (an Hungarian Hussar, who had left the army), to throw the pouch and its contents overboard, and was informed by him shortly afterwards that my order had been obeyed. Our voyage now gradually approached its termination, and on the 10th of August we arrived safe at Ancona. After we had passed quarantine, my fellow-travellers dispersed immediately upon landing, and I proceeded to Rome. When I had taken up my quarters in an hotel, I discovered among my luggage a leathern pouch, that strongly resembled the one bequeathed to me by the Greek Monk. On inquiring of my servant how it came there, he stammered out an excuse, saying that he had been prevented from obeying my orders, by observing, just as he was preparing to throw the pouch into the water, that it contained some hard substance, besides articles of clothing, and had therefore resolved to keep it for a time, that, on a more favourable opportunity, he might more closely examine its contents. Such an opportunity had not occurred, and he entreated me to let him now examine the box in my presence. As I, myself, was rendered somewhat curious by his narrative, we opened the pouch, and my servant took out the following articles:—two old woollen shirts, two worn-out pocket-handkerchiefs, two Greek prayer-books, and a red cap. These were followed by another woollen shirt, in which were enveloped a metal cup, black with rust, and an antique monstrance, likewise of metal, containing twenty-four small pieces of bone, with Greek inscriptions. At last came another small packet, wrapped in wool, and containing a picture of the Madonna, with the Infant Christ, painted upon metal, the outline of which could scarcely be discovered through a thick coating of soot. In a small wooden box were some ill-made rosaries, and in an old book-cover were a piece of parchment and a paper, inscribed with Greek letters.

On the first superficial glance at Father Isaac's legacy, I felt inclined to give the whole of it to my servant, who had taken out all the articles with the most eager curiosity, and had unfolded them with the firm conviction that they concealed some treasure. The monk, he thought, would not have undertaken the voyage without weighty reasons, and without the necessary means. In vain, however, did he shake the

pouch, and turn it inside out; no treasure—at least in his sense of the word—came to light. However, having remarked the apparent antiquity of some of the articles, I resolved to subject them to a closer investigation, and accordingly, after some days, I took the picture, the cup, and the monstrance to one of the first dealers in antiquities, who, after a long and accurate examination, returned them to me with an air of apparent indifference, at the same time remarking, that none of them had any great value as works of art, but that he would give me thirty ducats, as the price of the fine metal of which they were made. As I did not feel disposed to accept the proffered amount, I was about to take my departure, when the dealer asked me for my address, and came on the following morning to offer me, out of especial courtesy, as he said, the sum of fifty ducats, which he, at last, raised to one hundred sequins. The excessive urgency of the man in trying to strike a bargain, made me really curious to know the real worth of the articles, and I therefore dismissed him with the excuse, that I did not wish to dispose of them at present.

After a few days, when the articles were examined by another connoisseur, the black rusty cup proved to be of silver, and moreover a work of the earliest Byzantine period, while the monstrance, which was also of silver, and deeply gilt, belonged to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and the pieces of bone that it contained were, as the inscriptions stated, relics of saints and martyrs, who had perished in Palestine.

At the time when the examination of these articles was going on, the ex-librarian, afterwards Cardinal Mezzofanti, whose acquaintance I had had the honour to make at Bologna, and who was not only a celebrated philologist, but also a profound judge of art and antiquities, happened to be at Rome. I therefore took my little collection to him, and asked him to examine it. The Reverend Abbot testified great interest in the matter, and expressed a highly favourable opinion with respect to the articles. Soon afterwards, on the part of a person whose name he did not mention, he offered to buy all that he had seen at my own price. As I wished first to ascertain completely the value of my treasure, attaching especial importance to a translation of the Greek documents, I partially declined this handsome offer, while, that I might in some degree comply with the Abbot's wishes, I consented to sell the monstrance, two rosaries, and a sword, the handle of which was made of embossed silver, and set with two rubies. For these articles he at once gave me 2,000 scudi. The sword, together with a dagger of similar workmanship and a rosary adorned with very handsome filigree-work in silver, I had purchased in Jerusalem, from an Armenian, who, on building his house, had found them in a coffin, which he had discovered in a subterranean vault. When the Reverend Abbot saw that, in spite of his repeated offers, I would not part with the picture, the cup, or the documents, he kindly advised me to have the picture cleaned of the soot that adhered to it,

by a skilful restorer. The shortness of my stay at Rome rendered it impossible that I should have the picture cleaned there; but my curiosity to learn the contents of the Greek documents would not allow me to defer the translation any longer. Their contents might, perhaps, remove the obscurity which seemed to envelope the history of the picture in particular. I therefore lost no time in looking out for a learned man, and soon found such a person as I wanted. He made the following translation, which afterwards, on being collated with the original, by several German scholars, was pronounced accurate.

The parchment contains the Will of Azarias, which runs thus:—

“ + + + I go to Golgotha, where Jesus Christ suffered, and where Mary, the Mother of God and Mary Magdalene wept, so that blood flowed from their eyes. I go to Jesus Christ, because I can live no longer in this sinful world. + + + I weep for my sins, eat no bread when I am an-hungered, and drink no water when the sun burns me. + + + When Jesus Christ has forgiven my sins, and I shall go to Him, and to my brethren, who in great joy dwell with the grace of God and the Mother of God in Heaven. + + + I came into the world, through Jesus’ will, without possessions, and so shall I depart from this earth to wherever my brethren lay me. + + + + give to thee, my brother Zacharias, all that I possess, because I shall be in Heaven in Glory. + + + I give thee the Holy Cross, which I love, I take it into my hand, and weep over Jesus Christ, until I go to sleep in eternity. + + + I give thee the holy face of Jesus Maria Hodegedria, which the holy Evangelist Luke has finished, which I love, and in which I die, as the holy Mother of God has died in it. Pray as I pray, until death, then wilt thou be freed from all venomous disease, and from all their enemies. They will not find thee even as the Holy Virgin, Mother of God, and Jesus were not found by the accursed infidels, because they were concealed in a stone case, and covered with water for eight hundred years, in Constantine’s well, where they were discovered by the pious brothers, Nicola and Elias. + + + I give thee the cup, which I love, and drink from it, at the fountain of Mary (here the MS. is illegible) . . . . devil accursed, come to the mercy of God. + + + Pray for me—pray for my sins. I pray for thee and for thy sins, through Jesus Maria Hodegedria, to Eternity. + Thy Brother Azarias.” +

On the paper is the following inscription:—

“Thrice in the name of Jesus Christ and of Mary the Mother of God, do I call upon God, my Father, for mercy. I have sinned—my soul is impure: may Jesus Maria Hodegedria forgive me, that I may come to thee in Paradise.”

Although this Will, probably made by some pious monk, a predecessor of Father Isaac, casts only a single ray of light on the history of the picture, we derive the



important fact, that it was painted by St. Luke, and that it had lain for an inconceivable length of time in Constantine's well, at Jerusalem (known at the present day as Constantine's cistern), into which, doubtless, it had been sunk by one of its former owners, to preserve it, uninjured, from the destructive violence of the enemies who so often ravaged Jerusalem and its holy churches. Another proof, no less conclusive, that this picture had been concealed from the eye of man for ages, is the circumstance, that of the many celebrated travellers and pilgrims who wandered through Palestine from both religious and scientific motives, not one had discovered this inestimable treasure, long before the black crust had been formed upon it, and communicated his discovery to the world. Besides, the church or monastery to which it belonged would have had no scruple in making use of the possession to induce believing Christians to perform a pilgrimage to the true picture of the Mother of God and the Child Jesus. By what chance and at what time the Brothers Nicola and Elias again discovered the picture we cannot determine, even to an approximate degree of accuracy. However, many similar instances of remarkable discovery testify in favour of the genuineness of the treasure. We may recall, for instance, the discovery of the Holy Coat in a marble chest at Zafad, near Jerusalem, whence it was brought by Gregory of Antioch, Thomas of Jerusalem, and John, Bishop of Constantinople, and preserved on the spot where adoration was paid to the Holy Cross. At the same time we cannot determine with certainty who Azarias, the maker of the Will, really was, and at what period he made it. The opinion of the learned men whom I consulted on the subject, was to the effect that the MS. belonged to the fifteenth or sixteenth century. An equally impenetrable obscurity prevails as to the manner in which so precious a relic, and so valuable a work of art as the portrait of Jesus Maria Hodegedria, fell into the hands of Azarias, and subsequently into those of Father Isaac. Nicola, and Elias, who most likely were monks, were probably the first owners of the picture after they had discovered it, but after their time it seems to have passed, like an heir-loom, from one brother to another, none of the successive owners being aware of its value, until at last Father Isaac, attracted by the accompanying documents, had bestowed more attention upon it, and had ultimately resolved, for some especial purpose, to take it to Europe, together with the other valuable articles.

It may be easily imagined how joyfully I was surprised by the contents of the will, and how I was invaded by a curious throng, as soon as the news of the discovery had spread abroad. After a short time I quitted Rome, and went to Paris. During my longer stay here I learned the art of picture-cleaning, and thus, after an infinite expenditure of time, money, and labour, I succeeded—though not till more than four years had elapsed—in partially removing from the surface of my picture the almost petrified crust, and rendering the work so far visible, that the painting and the black

arabesques in the dark back-ground became discernible, as well as several fragments of Greek, inscribed at the back in gold letters, which were even rendered partially legible.

I had now some reward for my trouble, and was satisfied for the time with the improved appearance of my picture, for which I ordered a handsome and suitable frame. In this restored condition I showed it to some of my acquaintance, and also to several connoisseurs, who were all struck, more or less, with its pleasing peculiarities. Soon afterwards I was visited by several of the clergy, who earnestly intreated me to make a gift of the picture to the Church, and because I would not comply with their request, repeated it through the medium of the public journals. The same thing happened to me, some years afterwards, in my own country, Hungary. When Archbishop Kopácsy, the Primate of that kingdom, heard of the picture, he paid me a visit in person, and, after a due examination, desired to purchase it at any price, that he might erect for it, as he said, a pilgrim-church. I had already formed a plan of my own, which was not compatible with a sale of the picture, and I was therefore compelled to decline the offer of the reverend prelate. Scarcely was my answer made known, than I was attacked in the journals. On this account I refused to show it to any one, with a few rare exceptions.

About eight years ago I received a visit from an excellent connoisseur, who, after examining the picture in the sun, with a strong magnifying glass, discovered a gold ground, glimmering through the dark back-ground upon which the black arabesques were painted. This induced me to venture on another experiment at cleaning, with stronger acids, and the result was, that after some time the dark layer, painted over with arabesques, began to give way. In the first moment of surprise I fancied that I had destroyed the whole picture. However, on closer inspection, I found that the layer, now disclosed, did not belong to the original picture, but was a mere coating of oil colour, intended, no doubt, to conceal the original ground. When, after a continuation of the process, this layer was completely removed, a beautiful gilt ground appeared, covered with inscriptions, which were afterwards recognised as old Chaldaic. This unexpected discovery encouraged me to proceed, but without any further result, excepting that I freed the Madonna and Child from the coating which still adhered to them, so that they came out perfectly clear, and that the inscriptions on the back became tolerably legible.

In this restored condition, without the slightest speck upon it, the picture has been preserved to the present day.

### THE PICTURE

is painted on a copper-plate, 10 inches by 8 in size, and represents Maria Hodegedria (the guide), with the Child Jesus, as mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke, and here painted with his own hand.

In the conception and treatment of this picture, the character of the Greek painters during the first century B.C. is discernible, expressing, with tolerable plainness, the later tendency of Greek art towards the representation of the Divine. In the execution of the work, which is distinguished by much carefulness and harmony, a correctness of drawing, such as can only be based on due knowledge of form, is not to be expected, nor is the general effect at all diminished by the circumstance that we perceive a growing tendency to shapelessness in the legs of the child. All this belongs to the period of St. Luke the Evangelist, who, being an amateur in painting, merely walked in the paths of his predecessors. The colouring is rich, and carefully studied, as though the artist deemed it essential to a faithful imitation of nature, and sought, by a blending of hues, to manifest to posterity the divine beauty that had floated before him. The whole gives evidence of a labour undertaken with love, and accomplished with pious care, and is, moreover, a proof of the versatility of St. Luke's genius, of which, indeed, we are informed in the history of his life.

From an accurate knowledge of the facts that may be deduced from the records of the earliest Fathers of the Church, and other authors, and from the copies made many centuries later, of pictures belonging to the period in question, we arrive at the result, that the portrait of Jesus Maria Hodegedria, which, by the most wonderful dispensation of Providence has come down to the present day, is the only remaining picture of that ancient time. Passing over the circumstance that we thus gain a true conception of the state of painting in the first century, and that a gap is thus filled up in the history of the art, we come to another fact, which presses on the mind with overpowering majesty and greatness, surrounding the picture with incomparable glory, and making it a holy relic in the eyes of every Christian, as the most precious jewel of his faith and his veneration;—the fact, that it brings before us a faithful likeness of the Mother of God and the Infant Redeemer.

The Heavenly Virgin is here represented in a dark red garment, embroidered with small stars. About her head is twined a handkerchief of similar colour, which hangs down, and beneath which the fore part of the right arm with the hand, and the closely fitting under garment are visible. On her left arm she bears the Infant Christ, wrapped in a white under garment, with a gold-coloured mantle over it. He is raising his right hand, as if in the act of benediction, and placing his left on his mother. An expression of indescribable loveliness is in his features, and in severe majesty, proper to the Son of God, does the spark of future greatness plainly beam from his beautiful eyes. The innocent, lovely face of the Holy Virgin, upon which is breathed an irresistible charm, comes out from the back-ground with wonderful clearness, through the warmth of its tone, and all that is most tender and lovely in woman's soul is concentrated in her gentle eyes. The whole aspect denotes a moral elevation and holiness, before which every profane thought

shrinks, and the believer and the philosopher may, with equal sincerity, fall down before this Madonna, and adore in her the immaculate Virgin Mary—the Mother of God.

The appearance of the Mother of God is thus described by Nicephorus, after Epiphanius (48, xxiv. Niceph, lit 2, c. 23, *Effigies*):—“She was in all respects venerable and serious, speaking no more than was needful, and always inclined to listen to every one. Yet she was very amiable, showing every one the degree of honor and respect that was his due. Her deportment towards all was marked by a decorous freedom of language, without much laughter, or any excess of timidity; and she never gave way to a vivacious expression of her thoughts. She was of a middle stature, though some place her above it. Her complexion was like the color of corn, her hair was yellow, her eyes, which were of an olive-yellow, were bright and piercing; her eyebrows were arched, and inclining to black; her nose was rather long; her lips were full, overflowing with sweetness of language. The face was not round, but oval; and her hands and fingers were somewhat long. In fine, she was wholly without fault—simple without dissimulation in her countenance, without feminine weakness, and with an expression of singular humility. In her dress she generally chose natural colors, of which we have confirmation at the present day, in the holy veil which she wore on her head. In a word, she in every respect manifested the grace of God. In another place, Nicephorus testifies that St. Luke not only painted the portrait of the Mother of God, but also that of our Redeemer, in colors. (61, ix., *De rebus Lucæ*.)

The gilt ground of the picture is thickly covered with Chaldaic inscriptions, in a light-brown color. The learned Hebraists, who translated them into German, declared with one accord that the whole manner of writing, and the character of the letters, was genuine Chaldaic, and belonged to the earliest times, of which such another documentary monument was scarcely to be found. The translations were as follow:—

I. “My spirit rejoiceth in the God of Israel; mine eyes have seen Jesus Maria; may the devices of my heart be acceptable to Jesus Maria. Anoint my head with oil, and give peace to thy servant Luke, in the sight of Jesus Maria. Jesus Maria give strength to thy servant Luke to proclaim thy name.”

On the red handkerchief of Maria is to be seen, likewise in the Chaldaic character, the following inscription:—“Jesus Maria Hodegedria.”

These inscriptions are of the highest and most decisive importance with regard to the history and authenticity of the picture. There is no doubt that they are from the hand of the Evangelist St. Luke, who painted the picture, and, as the first owner of it, took upon himself the right of expressing, by pious ejaculations written upon it—in conformity, it seems, with the custom of the time—the direction of his mind, and his veneration for the persons whose portraiture his pencil was to preserve for future

generations. That he chose the Chaldaic language as a vehicle for his feelings is a proof of his extensive erudition. Probably, too, he found an additional motive in the circumstance, that this was the language of the Mother of God, and was moreover only intelligible to a few of the initiated. How rarely it was written, even at that time, is amply proved by the fact, that no trace of a similar character has been found in any public library, or in any archive existing at the present time.

A short biography of the Evangelist St. Luke, compiled from the earliest sources, may not be unacceptable to the reader.

### BIOGRAPHY OF ST. LUKE.

The author of the third gospel was—as is well known—named Luke (Λουκᾶς). His birth-place was Antioch, the capital of Syria. Famed in the writings of the greatest orators\* of those times for its agreeable situation, the fertility of its soil, the prosperous condition of its trade, the wisdom of its senate, the learning of its professors, and the cultivation and urbanity of its inhabitants, and still more distinguished by the especial privilege of being the first city in which the disciples took the name of Christians, Antioch possessed an university, which, as a seat of erudition, maintained professors for all arts and sciences. Thus born, if we may use the expression, in the lap of the Muses, St. Luke naturally had the advantage of a liberal and comprehensive education. Nay, it is said† that he studied not only in Antioch, but likewise in all the schools of both Greece and Egypt, where he was initiated into every branch of learning. Thus equipped with a requisite knowledge of philosophy, he devoted himself particularly to the study of medicine, for which the academies of Greece were highly celebrated, and which was, moreover, conducive to the spread of the Gospel. In addition to his medical labors, St. Luke is said to have acquired uncommon proficiency in the art of painting,‡ and several pictures executed by his hand were in existence, the rarest of which was the portrait of Jesus Maria Hodegedria. It is also recorded, that in an old vault at Rome,§ which is looked upon as the abode of St. Paul, and is situated in the Church of Santa Maria, in Via Lata, an ancient inscription has been found, which makes mention of a likeness of the Holy Virgin, as one of the seven pictures that owed their existence to the hand of St. Luke the Evangelist.

Lardner is of opinion that St. Luke was a Jew, on the ground that he always lived near the Apostle Paul, which he thinks would have been hardly possible, had he been a heathen, on account of the hatred of the Jews. Another proof of this opinion might

\* Dio Chrysos. Orat. 47. De Patria.

† S. Metaphr. ad diem 18 Oct. 289.

‡ Metaphr. Ibid. Lib 2, c. 48.

§ Rom. Subterr., Part 2, c. 46, 12, 10, p. 188.

be sought in the circumstance that St. Luke employed the Jewish mode of computing time, and even makes mention of the Jewish festivals, as we find in the Acts of the Apostles. These arguments, however, are, as Michaelis justly observes, by no means conclusive, the first being merely based on the silence of the historian, who, on all occasions, refrains, with the greatest modesty, from speaking about himself, and the second on a knowledge of the Jewish method of computation, that might easily have been possessed by a heathen historian, especially a learned and cultivated man, who, as a companion of the Apostle Paul, must have been continually brought into contact with the Jews. The probability is that St. Luke was of heathen origin. This indeed may be inferred from the Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 11—14), where St. Paul greets several persons—Aristarchus, Marcus, Jesus Justus—and then adds, that they are “of the circumcision,” thus distinguishing them from the uncircumcised, whom he enumerates immediately afterwards, and among whom St. Luke is mentioned.

As for the opinion of Epiphanius \* and others, that St. Luke was one of the seventy disciples, who left the Redeemer on account of the severe discourse which he addressed to them, and who were afterwards recalled by St. Paul, we may conjecture that is founded on a mere invention, like that according to which St. Mark abandoned Christ on the same occasion, and was brought back by St. Peter, one story having been devised to correspond with the other. Nor is there a better reason for the assertion † that St. Luke was one of the two disciples who went to Emmaus. To say nothing of the silence of Scripture on this matter, St. Luke himself confirms, that he was not from the beginning a servant of the Word. Hence it is highly probable that he was first converted by St. Paul, during the sojourn of the latter at Antioch. Thus, as the Apostles, from fishers of fish became fishers of men, so did he, from a physician of the body, become a physician of the soul. He was the inseparable companion and assistant of St. Paul in the service of the gospel, especially after he had been to Macedonia. From this time he always speaks of himself in his own person, whenever he relates the history of St. Paul's travels. He followed him through all his perils, was with him during his various arraignments at Jerusalem, accompanied him on his important expedition to Rome, where he remained constantly near him, to provide for his necessities, to perform spiritual services, when the Apostle himself was prevented by imprisonment, and more particularly to arrange communications with those churches where he had already implanted Christianity. For this faithful adherence St. Luke was greatly beloved by St. Paul, who acknowledged him as his fellow-believer, and called him his “dear

\* Hæres. 51, p. 188.

† Theoph. ut prius.

physician and brother," as we find from the Scriptures, and also from the early fathers, especially Ignatius.\*

It is probable that St. Luke did not quit St. Paul till the latter had ended his career by dying a martyr to his faith, although some maintain† that he separated from the Apostle at Rome, returned to the East, travelled over Egypt and some parts of Lybia, preaching the gospel everywhere, converted a great number of the inhabitants, appointed heads and servants of the new religion, and even took upon himself the office of a Bishop in the city of Thebes. Epiphanius informs us that St. Luke preached first in Dalmatia and Galatia, then in Italy and Macedonia, where he spared no effort, shunned no peril to justify the confidence that was reposed in him.

The early writers are agreed neither as to the time nor the manner of his death. Some are of opinion that St. Luke died in Egypt, others again fix upon Greece as the spot: the Roman Martyrology‡ designates Bithynia; Dorotheus§ mentions Ephesus; nay, some assign to him a natural, others a violent death. Neither Eusebius nor St. Jerome say anything on the subject; but Nazianzen,|| Paulinus\*\*, Bishop of Nola, and others, expressly declare his martyrdom, respecting which Nicephorus†† circumstantially relates, that St. Luke arrived in Greece, preached there with success, and baptized many in the Christian faith, until he was attacked by a mob of unbelievers, who dragged him off to execution, and for want of a cross, hung him upon an olive tree, in the eightieth year of his age; or, according to Jerome, the eighty-fourth. Kirsternus,‡‡ on the authority of an old Arabic writer, makes him suffer martyrdom at Rome, adding his opinion, that the event took place shortly after the first imprisonment and departure of St. Paul, who left St. Luke behind him as his representative. He also alleges that this was the cause why St. Luke did not finish the Acts of the Apostles, which he would assuredly have done had he lived long after St. Paul's departure. His body, by command of Constantine, or his son, was afterwards brought solemnly to Constantinople, where it was buried in the great church, dedicated to the memory of the Apostles. St. Luke wrote two books for the use of the Church—his Gospel, and the Acts of the Apostles. Both of them are dedicated to Theophilus, supposed by many of the ancient writers to be a fictitious name, used to designate a lover of God, and consequently an appellation which may be applied in common to all good Christians. Others assume, with more probability, that the name really belonged to an individual,

\* Epist. ad Ephes., p. 44.

† Metaphr. nt supra., v. 11.

‡ Ad diem. Oct. 18. p. 645.

§ De rit. mort. App. Ph. Tom 3, p. 148.

|| Orat. I in Jul., p. 76.

\*\* Epist. 12 ad Sever. de Basil. p. 138.

†† Lib. II., c. 43., p. 210.

‡‡ Vit. Quat. Evangel., p. 45.

inasmuch as it is accompanied by the designation "most excellent," by which princes and other persons of high rank were generally accosted in the time of Luke. Theophylactus considers him to have been a man of consular dignity, and in all probability a prince. The author of the "Recognitions" makes him a nobleman of Antioch, who, having been converted by St. Peter, bequeathed his house to the Church as a place of assembly.

St. Jerome is of opinion that St. Luke wrote his Gospel in the course of his travels in Achaia with St. Paul, of whose assistance he often availed himself while composing it; and that this, therefore, is the Gospel of which the Apostle so often speaks as his own. But whatever assistance may have been afforded by St. Paul, this much is certain, that St. Luke, as he himself says, derived that part of his information which relates to things which he had not seen from persons who, from the beginning, had been eye witnesses of what had happened, and servants of the Word. If we consider who the persons were from whom St. Luke derived his information respecting the things that he did not himself witness, we shall find that (as Tertullian says) he had a perfect right to give it as authentic, and really states nothing in his Gospel that he has not derived from those who were present at the events recorded, either as witnesses or agents. As for the motive which induced him to commit his facts to writing, we may conjecture that he was influenced partly by a desire to put a stop to those fabulous narratives that even at that period were thrust upon the world, partly by a wish to supply what was wanting in the two Gospels already in existence. He especially insists on the sacerdotal dignity of Christ, and although he records other portions of the Evangelical history, he always has an eye to his master's priestly office, whence the ancients, when they interpreted the four symbolical figures in the vision of Ezekiel, referred the ox, or calf, to St. Luke.

The Acts of the Apostles he wrote, no doubt, at Rome, at the end of the two years' captivity of St. Paul, with which his history concludes. This book contains the deeds, and partly the sufferings of some of the principal Apostles, particularly St. Paul; for not only did the activity of the latter, in the cause of Christ, subject him to a more than ordinary amount of labour and suffering, but St. Luke was his constant companion, an eye-witness of the entire course of his life, his confidant in all his most important transactions, and, hence, was more especially in a position to compose a more perfect and satisfactory record, well knowing that no testimony concerning facts can be more natural and convincing than that which he gives, inasmuch as he states nothing but what he has himself seen and heard. Among other things, he gives us especial information respecting those great miracles which were wrought by the Apostles in confirmation of their doctrines. For this reason, as Chrysostom informs us,\* the Book of Acts, although it

\* Serm. 73. Cur Act. App. leguntur in Pentec. Tom. 5.



relates to the deeds of the Apostles after Pentecost, was read in the earliest ages before that festival, namely, between Easter and Whitsuntide; whereas, those portions of the Gospel were read (as, indeed, they always are) which were suitable to the order of time. The reason of this was, that the miracles of the Apostles were regarded as the chief confirmation of the truth of the Resurrection of Christ, and as these were recorded in the Book of Acts, this book seemed most proper to be read after the Easter festival.

In both these books the language of St. Luke is concise and accurate; his style is polished and elegant, lofty, clear, and intelligible, easily flowing with that natural beauty and grace which so greatly improves historical narratives. The Greek idiom, in which he expresses himself, is far more pure than is found in the other writers of Scripture. As he was born and bred at Antioch, which, for oratory, was the famous city throughout the East, it is not to be wondered that, in this respect, he stood high above his associates; although here and there his writings incline to a Syriac or Hebrew tone. According to St. Jerome, it was remarked in the earliest ages that he was more proficient in Greek than in Hebrew, and that on this account he always made use of the Septuagint, and sometimes left words untranslated, where a translation would have been contrary to the peculiarity of the Greek language. In short, as an historian, he is faithful in his narrative, and elegant in his style; as a pastor of souls, he was active and circumspect for the spiritual welfare of his flock; as a Christian, he was devout and pious, and finally he set the crown on his whole career, by laying down his life, as a testimony to the gospel which he had propagated with his lips and with his pen.

The back of the picture is painted green, and is, in great part, covered with inscriptions, which, nevertheless, have suffered, more or less, from the circumstance that, in many places, the colour has been rubbed off. From the position and character of these inscriptions, it is clear that they were written at very different times, by different persons, who were, doubtless, possessors or guardians of the picture. It is likewise obvious that each owner wrote down his own inscription, without regard to his successors. Hence we find that the uppermost inscription is, by many centuries, more recent than the one in the centre, which, being in the most convenient place for the purpose, is unquestionably the oldest of all on the back of the work, and may be attributed, with great probability, to the first or second owner after the Evangelist himself. To give, therefore, a better survey of the history of the picture, so far as is possible from the inscriptions now in existence, and still legible, I give them in chronological order, rather than in that in which they are written.

II. "The Lord gave me the Mother—(here follow five or six illegible words)—I die in Jesus."

These two sentences are written with black colour, and in the old Chaldaic language, the character being somewhat similar to that which surrounds the head of the Madonna, on the other side. Although they are no more than fragments, and the part that has become illegible is, perhaps, precisely that which would have given us some light as to the writer, we may fairly assume that they are by St. John the Evangelist. It was he, as is well known, to whom the Redeemer confided his mother, by his last will, expressed upon the cross. In compliance with this injunction, John took the Virgin Mary to his own residence—her husband, Joseph, having died some years before—and treated her with the greatest affection. As it may be assumed, with great probability, that St. Luke gave the portrait of the Mother of God to the Virgin herself, it is equally natural that Mary bequeathed it to the person to whom she was attached by ties both of kindred and of gratitude, and who had been nearest to her through life. This could be no other than St. John, who wishing, doubtless, to record the fact by some inscription, thought that none could be more appropriate than one which showed the solemn office with which the Lord had entrusted him. “The Lord gave me the Mother.” As for the last fragment, “I die in Jesus,” it may be looked upon as an expression of his own unshaken faith in the Lord. John, as is well known, lived till the time of Trajan, and died about the beginning of that Emperor’s reign, at the age of 98 or 99, it is supposed, as a martyr. He founded several churches; his chief place of residence was Ephesus.

The last sentence is followed by several words in Greek, which, however, have become so illegible, that no sense can be extracted from the isolated letters remaining. They apparently belong to the second century. Beneath them is the name Polycarp (III.) which can be rendered plainly legible with the aid of a magnifying glass. Although unfortunately there is not a word which will allow us to conjecture the meaning of the inscription, but all that is left is the name of the writer, we may assume, not without reason,—especially as we are justified by the period to which the character belongs,—that this Polycarp was no other than the friend and disciple of Our Lord’s favourite, the Apostle John, after whose death he probably became possessor of the picture, and, in imitation of his predecessor, recorded the fact of his ownership, by inscribing a sentence, signed with his name.

The traveller who proceeds from the ruins of the old classical Smyrna to the city that now bears its name, will find the wall of an ancient Christian church, long since destroyed, in which, according to a legend still current, the grave of St. Polycarp was discovered. Even the Turks held this tomb and the memory of the man himself in remarkable veneration, affirming that he was a true friend of God. Polycarp suffered martyrdom close to the place of his burial, in the year A.D. 177 (consequently a year before the terrible earthquake which destroyed the town in 178), being first tortured

with flames, and afterwards slain with the sword. When the Pagan judge asked the old man, then nearly one hundred years of age, and happy in his faith, whether he would not save his life, and deny Christ, by sacrificing to the Emperor's Image, he replied :— "How could I abandon Him whose love and beneficence I have experienced for so many long years?" Yes, the aged man had laid to his heart those words of the divine Epistle, which had come to him from the hand of St. John—"He remained faithful unto death."

The next two sentences, which are in letters of gold, and being written in the characters of the fourth century, are about a century and a half more recent than the last, run as follows :—

IV. "Thou art the blessed Jesus, son of God and Mary, Mother of God. Let Helena die in thy mercy."

V. "In the mercy of God, Macarius, the servant of God, blesseth the true holy face of Jesus Maria Hodegedria, on the cross of Jesus of Nazareth."

In the scanty history of the picture that may be collected from these inscriptions, we have here a gap of nearly a century and a half. The question is, what became of the picture in the meanwhile.

As the epoch comprises just that period of Christianity in which the new faith had to suffer most through the persecutions of powerful Roman Emperors, there is good reason to believe that the picture was saved from destruction by a friend of Polycarp, or, still more probably, by the congregation at Smyrna (where the light of the true faith had never ceased to shine, and the martyr had played so conspicuous a part), and was kept as a precious pledge of the threatened religion in a place where the persecuted and terrified flock could worship God, and hold their deliberations in safety. No doubt the sight of so precious a talisman, of such a mighty protectress, inspired the congregation with fresh courage and renewed strength, to meet the impending sufferings. That the picture, during that time, was not the property of an individual, may be conjectured from the fact, that neither the name of an owner, nor any inscription is to be found, as, in the contrary event, would probably have been the case. When, through the victory of Constantine over the Pagan Licinius, the persecutions not only came to an end, but the Christian religion was suddenly made mistress of the world, we may easily conceive that the congregation of Smyrna took the picture, as an object of especial veneration, to Jerusalem, a place that was regarded above all others as the focus of the new faith, and was, therefore, deemed most worthy to possess such a treasure. Here, as public property, it was probably intrusted into the hands of the Bishop Macarius.

That the picture at that time was regarded as a holy relic may be best proved by the fact, that the Empress Helena, who performed a pilgrimage to the Holy City, to effect the discovery of the true cross, gave an enduring testimony of her veneration for

the persons whose portraits were represented, by an ardent outpouring of her religious convictions; for this she would scarcely have done, had not the Bishop drawn her attention to the value of the treasure. From the following sentence, written by the holy Bishop Macarius, we may infer that he was perfectly convinced of the importance of the picture, and that in order to enhance it as much as possible, he blessed the work after the discovery of the true cross, on the occasion of some great festivity connected with the signs of the Redeemer's sufferings, and that he afterwards set it up as an object of general veneration in the magnificent church raised on the grave of Our Lord, by order of the Emperor Constantine. Under these two sentences the names of Constantine and Helena may be read with the aid of a magnifying glass.

Then follows a sentence, written with black colour, and likewise in the character of the fourth century. Unfortunately, these fragments are alone legible:—

VI. "After the image of the glorious God," and the name "Dracilianus," which follows after an interval filled with several illegible lines, and is followed in its turn by a few obliterated words.

In the well-known epistle of the Emperor Constantine to Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, concerning the erection of a church over the grave of the Redeemer, the Emperor makes mention of one Dracilianus, then *Præfectus Prætorio* at Jerusalem, as the person who has to find both workmen and materials for the building of the church. It cannot be doubted that this Dracilianus is the same person with the one whose name may be read upon the picture, and equally probable is it, that he was called upon, as military governor of the province, to take part in all acts of a public character, and, therefore, most especially in the building of this church, and the registration of the treasures belonging to it, among which the picture of Jesus Maria Hodegedria unquestionably held the first rank. It is, moreover, possible, that when the picture was about to be hung in the place assigned to it, in the newly-finished church, the Bishop requested Dracilianus to confirm its sacred character and authority, which he did by writing the sentence that has now become illegible, and his own name.

However, the letter of Constantine to Macarius is of such high religious and historical interest, that I cannot avoid giving it at length:—

LETTER FROM CONSTANTINE TO MACARIUS, RESPECTING THE ERECTION OF A  
MONUMENT IN HONOUR OF THE REDEEMER'S DEATH.

"The mercy of our Redeemer is so great, that no language is adequate to express the marvellous event that I am now about to relate. That the memorial of His most holy sufferings, which remained so long buried under the earth, unknown to any one, at last re-appeared, after the extinction of the common enemy, is a fact above the reach of

all admiration. For if all the learned combined their wisdom to produce something worthy of the occasion, they would nevertheless prove unequal to the task. The nature of this last miracle far surpasses the power of the human understanding, even as heavenly things stand high above earthly interests. For this reason my first, or, more properly, my only endeavour is, that as the authority of the truth is daily manifested by new wonders, in like manner our souls may become more zealous in all sobriety and earnest unanimity for the honour of the divine laws.

“I wish, therefore, above all, that you should be convinced of that which is so conspicuous to the whole world, namely, that I have no greater care than in discovering how, by a splendid monument, I may best honour that sacred place, which, with the Divine assistance, I rescued from the oppression of idolatry; a place which, from the beginning, was deemed holy in the sight of God, and which has become still more holy since it has brought to the light of day such a testimonial of the sufferings of our Redeemer. Your wisdom will therefore do well in making provision of such things as shall be necessary above all to the furtherance of the work, that the Church may not only, as a whole, excel all similar edifices in beauty, but that in every one of its details it may be so built as to throw into the shade the most stately edifices of the Empire. With respect to the erection and decoration of the walls, it may be serviceable to you to know that Dracilianus, the Præfectus Prætorio, and the Governor of the Province, have been already instructed by me, and have received my pious orders to procure, at once, both artists and workmen, with everything that you, in your wisdom, may deem serviceable for the advancement of the building. As for the pillars and the marble, let me know, without delay, after you have inspected the plan, what you will require, that those materials may be procured, in any quantity, from every part. With respect to the arches, I wish you to inform me whether, in your opinion, they ought to be wainscoated, or finished in some other way. If they are to be wainscoated, gold may also be employed in the decoration. For the rest, your Holiness will communicate to the before-mentioned officers, as soon as possible, the expenditure, and the number of artists and workmen that will be required. You will also take care to advise us, without loss of time, respecting not only the marble and the pillars, but also the wainscoating, if you deem this form of ornament the best. God preserve you, my beloved brother.”

Here follows a sentence in the Greek character, written in gold. The writing is well preserved, and manifestly belongs to the fifth century.

VII. “Jesus Christ at thy tomb, Eudoxia, the wife of Theodosius.”

Between the probable date of this and the preceding inscription, a gap of more than a century again occurs, from which we may infer that the picture, during that time, was regarded more as public than as private property, so that an exception from the general

rule was only made in the case of so exalted a person as the Empress Eudoxia, who, as a special favour, was allowed to write a sentence upon the back. Indeed, it is clear, both from the import of this sentence, and the character in which it is written, that "Eudoxia" could be no other than the beautiful and noble Athenais, daughter of the Philosopher Leontius, of Athens, who, after she had taken the name of Eudoxia, and with it accepted the Christian religion, was married to the Emperor Theodosius the younger. She became afterwards so zealous a Christian, that she performed two pilgrimages to Jerusalem, built churches and convents there, and ended her pious life in one of the latter, in the year 450.

Next follow some illegible words in the Syrian language. Immediately after these is a sentence, written in the Greek language, with gold letters. The writing is in good preservation, and belongs to the seventh century.

VIII. "God and Maria are with me. Jerusalem sanctified at the tomb of Jesus Christ, Modestus Duaces."

Modestus Duaces was an Abbot of the Theodosian Convent at Jerusalem, from 614 to 634, and lived during that eventful period when the Persians, under Chosroes, took the Holy City by storm, and not only destroyed the church, but carried off the cross, together with the Patriarch Zacharias. It is very probable, that during the general confusion, and in the midst of the scenes of desolation which marked the steps of the wild conquerors, the Abbot succeeded in rescuing the picture of Jesus Maria Hodegedria, and in bringing it to a place of safety. After the departure of the Persians, we see the undaunted Abbot wandering through the country, to make a collection among the Christian communities for the rebuilding of the churches. His travels had the desired result; he returned back to Jerusalem with abundance of alms, restored the church raised over the Holy Sepulchre, so as to be fitted for public worship, and again set up the picture as an object of public veneration. This last event, which certainly did not occur without great solemnity, appears to have been indicated by Modestus—as the representative of the Patriarch—on the back of the picture. That the picture was still constantly treated as public property may be inferred from the circumstance, that the dates of the sentences, written by the Empress Eudoxia and Modestus, are separated by a gap of nearly two centuries, which would scarcely have been the case if the picture had belonged to private persons.

We now come to the sentence which, in point of chronological order, may be regarded as the last in the history of the picture. This is written with gold, in Greek letters, and likewise belongs to the seventh century.

IX. "Christ, who became flesh, and died upon the cross, will save thee in the water from the accursed Omer Ibu el Chattab."

Three and twenty years after the ravages of the Persians, the Holy City was taken by other and more formidable foes, namely, the Saracens, under their leader, Omer Ibu el Chattab. This time the sojourn of the enemy was not merely temporary, but he took formal possession of Jerusalem and the adjoining country, and held it under his dominion, until, after several centuries, he was expelled, first by the heroic Godfrey of Bouillon, and at a later period by the Turks.

From the sentence upon the picture it is clearly to be inferred that the owner or keeper of it saw no other means of preservation than by sinking it in a cistern, probably situated near the Church or a Convent. To leave behind him a record of the cause of this proceeding, the person in question wrote down the sentence relating to it, and moreover, to protect the picture from the destructive action of the water, enclosed it in a stone chest.

That the picture remained in its place of concealment for many centuries is evident from the circumstance, that during a long period no mention is made of it, and that after a careful examination of the archives that were known to me, I could not find any trace of its existence. The same inference may be drawn likewise from the will of Azarias, previously cited, as this was made about the fifteenth century, and obviously refers to the discovery of the picture by Nicola and Elias, as an event of somewhat recent occurrence.

On the back of the picture, in the middle, and partly above the different sentences, are the patriarchal arms of the Greek Church, depicted in gold, and surrounded by the monogram, "Jesus Maria," in remarkably large letters. This painting, which is somewhat damaged, apparently belongs to a later period—perhaps the fifteenth century.

30 MY 56

THE  
P O R T R A I T  
OF  
JESUS MARIA HODEGEDRIA,

ישו מריה חודגדריא

PAINTED BY  
ST. LUKE, THE EVANGELIST.

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AN HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

BY  
N. C. SZERELMEY,  
THE OWNER OF THE PICTURE.

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LONDON:  
PUBLISHED BY CHARLES DOLMAN,  
61, NEW BOND STREET, AND 22, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1856.



*Back Lane Black*







